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NEWS RELEASE

May 12, 2003

Contact: Vicki Watson, UM environmental studies professor, (406) 243-5153.

UM HELPS LAND WATER QUALITY GRANT

MISSOULA—

The Tri-State Water Quality Council has landed a \$1 million grant for water-quality improvement projects with help from many partners, including The University of Montana Watershed Health Clinic.

The council is a collection of citizen, business, industry, government and environmental leaders interested in improving waterways in the 26,000-square-mile Clark Fork-Pend Oreille watershed. The group was one of 20 organizations nationwide selected to receive a grant through the Environmental Protection Agency's Watershed Initiative.

UM environmental studies Professor Vicki Watson has worked with the Tri-State Water Quality Council since its formation in 1993. She directs UM's Watershed Health Clinic, which matches University students and staff with community groups that need technical assistance with watershed conservation, preservation and restoration.

"The Watershed Health Clinic conducts some of the Tri-State Water Quality Council's monitoring and provided some of the cost-match for their grant," Watson said. "We also provided technical assistance with development of the grant.

"I serve on the council's monitoring advisory committee and its Voluntary Nutrient Reduction Program Committee," she said. "Hence our clinic is a partner -- one of many -- in

-more-

this grant.”

Regional and national experts selected the grant winners from a highly competitive field of more than 176 nominations. The winners demonstrated ability to achieve on-the-ground environmental results in a short time frame. The watershed organizations also exhibited strong partnerships with a wide variety of organizations, showed innovation and demonstrated compatibility with existing government programs.

The grant will implement a set of restoration projects -- ranging from dairy waste management to riparian habitat restoration -- which are aimed at reducing nutrients and improving fish habitat in the northern Rockies. The council also is matching the grant with more than \$1 million in non-federal funds.

The Clark Fork-Pend Oreille watershed was the largest selected for the grant. More than 65 percent of the watershed's streams are not meeting the uses designated by states, making restoration and improvement of water quality imperative. In addition to the UM clinic, restoration project partners include the Flathead Basin Commission, Blackfoot Challenge, Bitterroot Partnership and Watershed Restoration Coalition of the Upper Clark Fork.

EPA Regional Administrator Robert Roberts said, “The new national Watershed Initiative targets mature community-based watershed groups that have developed science-based watershed plans, established broad partnerships and are ready to carry out projects that will measurably improve water quality.”

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